



Building 23 Fact Sheet

On Friday, April 17, 2015, in the early morning hours, law enforcement staff on patrol discovered the roof of Building 23 had suffered a partial collapse sometime overnight. From April 17 through May 1, a law enforcement ranger monitored the area during park hours to insure that no one entered the area. On May 1, the area around the structure was blocked off. Installation of a six-foot-high chain link fence around the perimeter is now complete.

The roof collapse was not unexpected. In mid-2014, one of the eight main trusses supporting the roof pierced through the brick wall of the structure just below the roof on the building's southeast side. It occurred in an area of the building where a fire took place in the late 1980s. Snow fencing was already in place because of another project; it was widened to surround the perimeter to keep visitors at a safe distance away from the building.

NPS hired Old Structures Engineering to assess the condition of the building. In October 2014, the firm issued a site visit report concluding that Truss #8 had collapsed completely, with Truss #5 also failed and near collapse. The report stated, "The rate of collapse and decay at this point in time is exponential and therefore there is no expectation that this portion of the building will survive the winter." In November 2014, the same firm calculated the cost of stabilization alone at \$1,248,242. Stabilization would support failing trusses but would not otherwise correct existing deficiencies. This means the building would remain not merely uninhabitable but unsafe to enter.

This topic was raised at the December 12, 2014 meeting of the Fort Hancock 21st Century Federal Advisory Committee. The park was trying to fund a full rehabilitation of Building 7. Should the park take this money to shore up Building 23 instead? The committee recommended that the park "not throw good money after bad", but instead invest the park's limited financial resources in a building that could be saved at much less expense, such as Building 7. The park concurred.

So, what are the next steps? As always, the park will be both deliberate and realistic in any decision pertaining to the future of Building 23 as we consider the options. While the park is always hesitant to consider demolition of historic buildings, the most important consideration is the safety of visitors, partners and employees.

This summer, Old Structures Engineering will return to assess the building. The park will evaluate the findings and consult with the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). For now, Building 23 remains on the list of structures available for lease. After we study all of the information, we will be able to proceed in an informed and thoughtful manner. As always, safety is our first priority.

The collapse of the roof of Building 23 is a sobering reminder that these buildings are in danger. Building 23, like many of the structures at FOHA, has been in a compromised state for decades but was more delicate than most of our structures. We believe that most buildings in the Fort Hancock Historic Post can be saved through adaptive reuse by dedicated leaseholders. The Fort Hancock 21st Century Federal Advisory Committee has been invaluable in this process. Leasing of some historic buildings has already begun and the process needs to accelerate. Fort Hancock was once a viable, vibrant community. It can be again—if we act now.